

Submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
October 21, 2015

## **2015 Cook Inlet Eastside Razor Clam Stock Status Update**

This RC is meant to update the board on the stock status of eastside razor clam populations. Cook Inlet razor clam sport and personal use fisheries were deliberated on during the Statewide Dungeness Crab, Shrimp, and Miscellaneous Shellfish meeting, March 17-20, 2015. The board deliberated on a suite of proposals (240-244) seeking to restrict Cook Inlet razor clam sport and personal use fisheries by regulation. The board opted to allow the department to continue managing the fishery using emergency order authority, provided stock status monitoring continued and that eastside razor clam fisheries remain closed until the population could support a sustainable fishery.

In 2015, the department conducted razor clam abundance surveys on all five beaches that had been monitored historically. Surveys were conducted on Ninilchik North and South beaches, and Clam Gulch North and South beaches that have supported the majority of the harvest. Monitoring also included Oil Pad Access North beach where harvest has been historically lower (Figure 1). The monitoring project objective and results are outlined below:

1) *Estimate razor clam abundance of mature ( $\geq 80$  mm) and juvenile ( $<80$  mm) size razor clams at Clam Gulch, Ninilchik and Oil Pad Access beaches.*

- Mature size razor clams (Table 1):
  - Abundance of mature size razor clams remained at historical low levels on all five beaches.
  - Natural mortality from 2014 to 2015 was estimated at 54% at the Ninilchik South beach.
- Juvenile size razor clams (Table 1):
  - Abundance of juvenile size razor clams remained at historical low levels on Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches.
  - Below average recruitment to the beach was observed on Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches.
  - At Oil Pad Access North beach a large number of young of year clams were observed in the abundance survey and resulted in the highest estimate of juvenile size razor clams from any of the beaches.

The department will close the fishery for the 2016 season and continue monitoring razor clam abundance on eastside beaches in the spring and fall of 2016. The closure will be included in the Southcentral Sport Fishing Regulations Summary book.

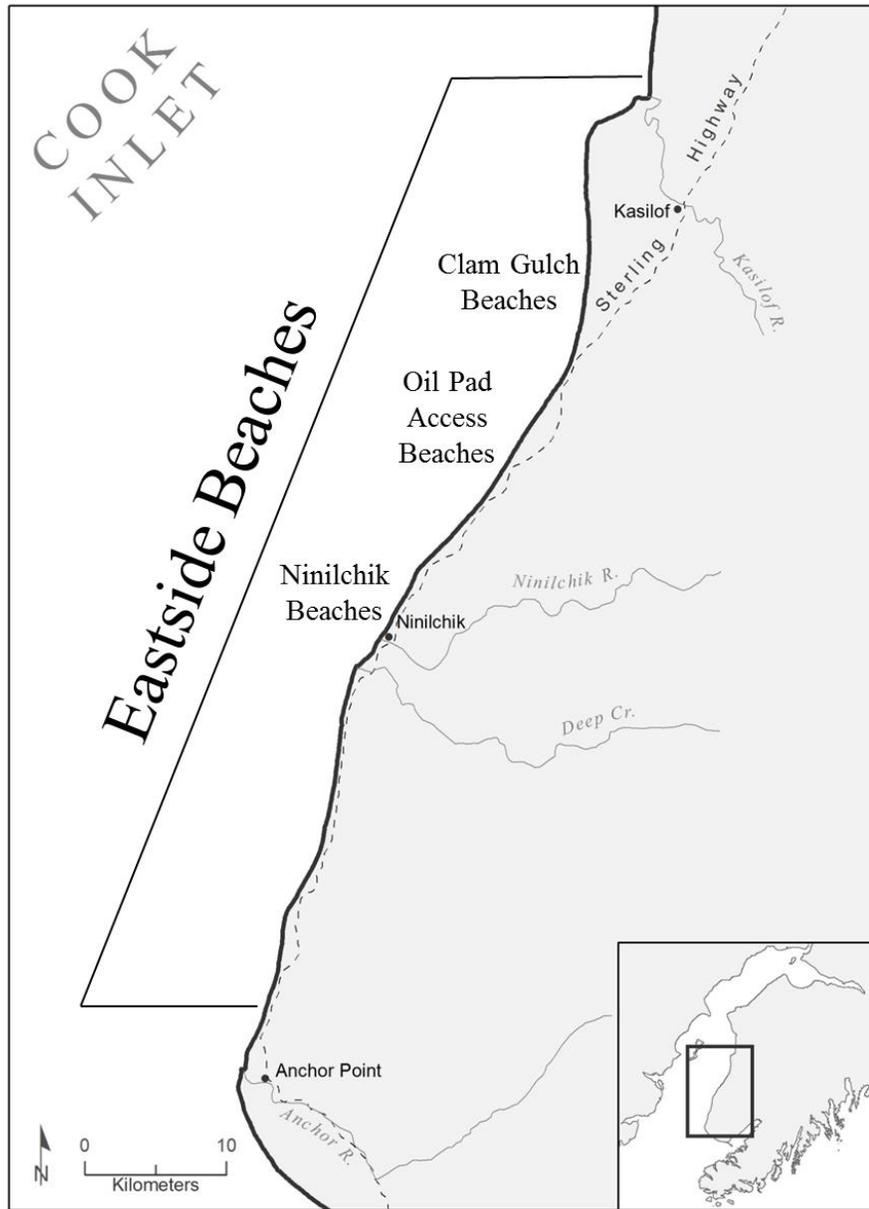


Figure 1.—Eastside beaches, Cook Inlet, Alaska.

Table 1.—Estimated number of mature size  $\geq 80$  mm and juvenile size  $< 80$  mm at Clam Gulch South and North beaches, Oil Pad Access North beach and Ninilchik South and North beaches, 1988-2015.

Abundance of mature size razor clams $\geq 80$ mm						Abundance of juvenile size razor clams $< 80$ mm					
Year	Clam Gulch		Oil Pad Access	Ninilchik		Year	Clam Gulch		Oil Pad Access	Ninilchik	
	North	South	North	North	South		North	South	North	North	South
1988			1,844,530			1988		1,511,345	307,323		
1989	1,645,048	2,616,217	1,171,220	421,675		1989	1,474,779	1,513,810	679,118	1,499,166	527,029
1990	1,798,280	1,074,908		573,810		1990	2,272,240	3,416,956		1,084,464	601,586
1991				1,821,120	251,601	1991				102,676	44,174
1992				3,336,073	237,755	1992				41,608	57,234
1998				597,993	308,129	1998				390,003	114,628
1999	4,036,610	6,139,901	6,578,773			1999	852,083	1,215,406	1,054,745		
2001				540,652	275,475	2001				220,256	359,037
2003				1,249,055	241,475	2003				2,303,824	402,163
2005				857,322	440,851	2005				506,444	517,109
2008	651,872	600,037	864,413			2008	1,170,770	765,571	515,757		
2011				1,212,311	1,621,765	2011				60,887	156,410
2012					624,992	2012					40,776
2013					65,688	2013					108,540
2014	327,815	174,188			90,344	2014	332,407	115,250			135,650
2015	164,851	106,005	107,474	33,535	69,934	2015	332,750	321,564	1,058,755	43,161	33,208
Average						Average					
89-14	1,691,925	2,121,050	2,614,734	1,178,890	415,808	89-14	1,220,456	1,423,056	639,236	689,925	255,361

\*blank spaces indicate no survey was conducted on the beach that year